

*Tract No. V. of the Society for the Promotion of  
Permanent and Universal Peace.*

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**SKETCHES**

OF THE

**HORRORS OF WAR,**

CHIEFLY SELECTED FROM

LABAUME'S NARRATIVE

OF THE

**CAMPAIGN IN RUSSIA,**

IN 1812.

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH;

WITH SOME OBSERVATIONS.

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BY EVAN REES.

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“ Whence come wars and fightings among you? Come they not hence, even of your  
lusts which war in your members?” *James iv. 1.*

“ A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit; neither can a corrupt tree bring forth  
good fruit.

“ Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them.” *Matthew vii. 18—20.*

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# SKETCHES

OF THE

## HORRORS OF WAR.

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**D**URING an eventful period of twenty-five years of nearly unremitting warfare, every nation of the civilized world has been involved in the contest, and each has, in turn, shared in its miseries, or groaned beneath its burdens. On some of those countries which have been the theatre of combat, the storm has burst with the fury of a volcanic eruption; whole provinces, systematically devoted to destruction, have exhibited a scene of extended havock, that has left few vestiges of civilization; in a few fleeting moments, flourishing cities have been reduced into a heap of smoking ruins; and the fields of Europe have been stained with the blood of millions.

These are the genuine effects of war; and if it be true, that "the tree is known by its fruit," we shall not be at a loss to determine the origin of this unchristian practice.

The character and achievements of the warrior, have ever been the favourite themes of the historian's narrative, and the poet's song. The sufferings of the wounded are lost in the animated description of the pomp of battle; the tears of the widow and the orphan are unnoticed in the enumeration of its ideal glories. All the powers of language, and every embellishment of style, have been lavished to immortalize the soldier's fame—to veil the hideous deformity of war—to give perpetuity to deeds of destruction—and to transform the destroyer of man into the most exalted of the human race. War is represented as the field on which the noblest energies of man are displayed; but to form a just conception of its nature we must view it in its characteristic abominations, not through the delusive medium by which it is invested with an alluring and baneful splendour. The sensation created by the atrocities of *one* midnight-assas-

sin\*, is fresh in every recollection; consternation reigned in the metropolis, and pervaded the whole kingdom: but when the intelligence was received of the untimely death of thousands, far different was the feeling; brilliant illuminations dispelled the darkness of night, and our streets resounded with the acclamations of unhallowed triumph. The injury sustained by the vanquished, will be found to regulate the demonstrations of public joy. If they have lost their thousands, it will call forth general congratulation; if tens of thousands have perished in the fight, it will kindle a transport of delirious exultation. But to rejoice in the calamities of our fellow-men, must surely be inhuman, and ungenerous; it must tend to vitiate the understanding, and to render the heart callous to the finest feelings of humanity.

In attempting to pourtray war in its true colours, we are aware, that no description can convey an adequate impression of its horrors; and that no imagination can conceive the full extent of its attendant evils. The Narrative of Labaume, from which the following extracts are principally selected, is acknowledged to be the best, and most authentic account of the Russian Campaign.† The author was attached to the staff of the fourth corps of the French army, commanded by Prince Eugene Beauharnois, and was an eye-witness of the miseries which he has related with so much feeling. In his preface, he says, "It was by the light of the burning of Moscow that I described the pillage of that city; it was on the banks of the Berezina that I traced the narrative of that fatal passage. It is scarcely possible to conceive the difficulties that I had to surmount; in order to make my memorandums. Compelled, like my companions in arms, to struggle with the most imperious necessity; benumbed with cold, and tormented with hunger, I was a prey to every kind of suffering. Uncertain, at the rising of the sun, whether I should see his setting rays, and in the evening, doubtful of witnessing another day, every thought seemed absorbed by the

\* The murders at Ratcliffe.

† The extracts are translated from the "Relation Circonstanciée de la Campagne en Russie, en 1812. Par Eugénie Labaume, Chef d'Escadron, Chevalier de la Legion d'Honneur, &c. 4me Edition, Paris, Février 1815."

desire of living, to preserve the remembrance of what I had seen. Animated by this inexpressible feeling, I wrote the events of the day every evening, before a bad fire, under a temperature from 20 to 22 degrees below the freezing point, and surrounded by the dying and the dead. I made my pens from the quills of the raven, with the same knife that I used in cutting up the horse-flesh for my food; a little gunpowder, mixed up in the hollow of my hand with melted snow, supplied the place of ink and inkstand."

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The spring of 1812 was employed by the French and Russians in the increase of their military strength, and whilst Napoleon assembled his legions on the frontiers of Poland, Russia collected all her resources, to await the impending conflict. The French army was composed of SIX HUNDRED AND EIGHTY THOUSAND MEN, AND ONE HUNDRED AND SEVENTY-SIX THOUSAND HORSES. If we deduct the Austrian corps, with the troops in garrison and reserve, its effective strength may have amounted to 400,000 infantry, 60,000 cavalry, and 1200 pieces of artillery.\* On the return of the French Ambassador from St. Petersburg, Napoleon issued a proclamation from Wilkowsiki, dated June 22, 1812, in which he announced the commencement of the second Polish war, and immediately took the field at the head of his army. The passage of the Niemen was effected on the 24th, and on the 25th they reached Wilna. In their retreat, the Russians carried off the inhabitants with their cattle, destroyed the corn and forage, laid waste the country, and burnt the towns and villages, in order to deprive their invaders of every means of subsistence and shelter.

Aug. 19. SMOLENSK.—After an obstinate battle, the Russians set fire to the city, and retreated, leaving the streets and squares covered with their dead and wounded. Labaume thus describes his entrance on the following day: "We entered Smolensk by the suburb on the bank of the river, marching in every direction over ruins and dead bodies. The palaces, still burning, presented to our view only walls cleft by the heat; amidst their smoking ashes lay the blackened carcasses of the inhabitants who

\* By a statement in the Quarterly Review, on the authority of a Westphalian officer, it would appear that the effective force was 494,000.

had perished in the flames. The soldiers had taken possession of the few remaining houses, whilst the proprietor, bereft of an asylum, stood at his door, weeping the death of his children, and the loss of his fortune. The churches alone afforded some consolation to the wretched beings who had no longer a shelter. The cathedral, celebrated throughout Europe, and highly venerated by the Russians, became the refuge of those who had escaped the conflagration. In this church, and round its altars, lay whole families stretched upon rags. Here, we saw an old man, expiring, cast his last looks towards the image of the Saint whom he had all his life invoked; there, a mother, weighed down by adversity, as she gave the breast to her infant, bathed it in her tears."

"In the midst of this desolation, the passage of the army into the interior of the city offered a striking contrast: on one side was seen the abject submission of the conquered; on the other, the pride attendant on victory. Those had lost their all; these, rich in spoils, and strangers to defeat, marched haughtily to the sound of martial music, at once impressing with fear and admiration, the unhappy residue of a vanquished population." P. 100.

Sept. 5th. BORODINO.—A redoubt on the left of the Russian position was taken by storm. "This important position was purchased with the blood of one thousand of our men, more than one half of whom were left dead in the entrenchments they had so gloriously carried. The next day the Emperor, passing in review the 61st regiment which had suffered the most, asked the colonel, what he had done with one of his battalions? 'Sire,' replied he, '*it is in the redoubt.*'" P. 131.

This affair was the prelude to a more dreadful combat. Sept. 7th. Before day-break the two armies were drawn up in order of battle. *Two hundred and sixty thousand men* waited, in awful suspense, the signal to engage. At six o'clock, the thunder of the artillery broke the dreadful silence. The battle soon became general, and raged with tremendous fury. The fire of 2000 pieces of cannon enveloped the two armies in smoke, and mowing down whole battalions, strewed the field with the dead and wounded. The latter fell to expose themselves to a death still more terrible, and to accumulated sufferings. How agonizing was

their situation! Forty thousand dragoons, crossing the field in every direction, trampled them under their feet, and dyed their horses' hoofs in blood. The flying artillery, in rapid and alternate advance and retreat, put a period to the anguish of some, and inflicted new torments on others who were mangled by their wheels. A redoubt in the centre of the Russian army was several times taken and retaken with desperate slaughter, and finally remained in possession of the French. "The interior of the redoubt presented a frightful scene; the dead were heaped on each other, and amongst them were many wounded, whose cries could not be heard. Arms of all descriptions were strewed over the ground; the battlements of the half destroyed parapets were razed, and the situation of the embrasures was only discovered by the cannon, the greater part of which were overturned and detached from their broken carriages." P. 146.

The night separated the combatants and put a stop to the destructive carnage. On this disastrous day, ever memorable in the annals of slaughter, EIGHTY THOUSAND MEN were sacrificed at the shrine of a mad ambition!\*

Sept. 8th.—"In traversing the elevated plain on which we had fought, we were enabled to form an estimate of the immense loss that had been sustained by the Russians. A surface of about nine square miles in extent, was covered with the killed and wounded; with the wreck of arms, lances, helmets, and cuirasses, and with balls as numerous as hail-stones after a violent storm. In many places the bursting of shells had overturned men and horses; and such was the havoc occasioned by repeated discharges, that mountains of dead bodies were raised. But the most dreadful spectacle was the interior of the ravines, where the wounded had instinctively crawled to avoid the shot; here these unfortunate wretches, lying one upon another, destitute of assistance, and weltering in their blood, uttered the most horrid groans. Loudly invoking death, they besought us to put an end to their excruciating torments. As our medical means of relief

\* The horses which lay on the ground from right to left, numbered full 25,000—*Narrative of the Campaign in Russia by Sir R. K. Porter. Second Edition (London, 1814), p. 151.*

were insufficient, our fruitless compassion could only lament the calamities inseparable from a war so atrocious." P. 153.

Sept. 9th.—“ As we drew near Rouza we met a great number of carts brought back by the cavalry. It was afflicting to see them loaded with children, and with the aged and infirm. We were grieved to think how soon the horses and carts, which formed the whole fortune of these ruined families, would be divided amongst the troops.”

“ In our advance to the centre of the town, we saw a crowd of soldiers who were pillaging the houses, regardless of the cries of those to whom they belonged, or of the tears of mothers, who, to soften the hearts of their conquerors, showed them their children on their knees ; these innocents, with their hands clasped, and bathed in tears, asked only that their lives might be spared. This rage for plunder was justifiable in some, who, dying with hunger, were only seeking to procure themselves food ; but many others, under this pretext, plundered every thing, and even robbed the women and children of the clothes that covered them.” P. 159.

“ We could judge of the consternation that reigned in the capital, by the terror with which we had inspired the peasantry. No sooner were they informed of our arrival at Rouza, and of the barbarous manner in which we had treated the inhabitants, than all the villages on the road to Moscow were instantly abandoned ; many of the fugitives, driven to desperation, set fire to their houses, their country seats, and to the corn and hay just gathered in. Discouraged by the fatal and useless resistance of the militia of Rouza, the greater part of them threw down the pikes with which they had been armed, and hastened to conceal themselves, with their wives and children, in thick forests at a distance from our route.” P. 164.

Sept. 15, Moscow.—“ At day-break, our corps left the village, where it had encamped, and marched upon Moscow. As we drew near the city, we observed that it had no walls, and that a simple parapet of earth was the only work which formed the outer enclosure. We had hitherto seen nothing to indicate that the capital was inhabited, and the road by which we arrived was so

deserted, that we did not see a single Muscovite, nor even a French soldier. No noise, no cry, was heard amidst this imposing solitude; anxiety alone guided our footsteps, which was redoubled when we perceived a column of thick smoke rising from the centre of the city. At first, we imagined that it only proceeded from some magazines, to which the Russians, as usual, had set fire in their retreat. Eager to know the cause of this conflagration, we sought in vain for some one who could tranquillize our restless curiosity; but the impossibility of satisfying it, redoubled our impatience, and increased our alarm." P. 194.

"Moscow was so extensive and depopulated, that notwithstanding the city had been in the possession of our troops since the preceding evening, we found neither soldiers nor inhabitants in the part which we were to occupy. A death-like silence reigned in the forsaken quarters: the most intrepid were intimidated by the loneliness. The streets were so long, that our cavalry could not recognize each other at the opposite extremities. Uncertain whether they were friends or enemies, they advanced slowly, then seized with fear, fled from each other, though under the same standards. As we took possession of a new quarter, parties were sent forward to reconnoitre, and to examine the palaces and churches; in the latter the altars were decorated as on a day of festival; in the former, they only found old men and children, or Russian officers who had been wounded in the preceding engagements." . . . . . "We marched with timid steps through this dismal solitude, often stopping to look behind us; for our imaginations, overpowered by the magnitude of our conquest, made us every where apprehensive of treachery. Sometimes we listened attentively, and at the least noise, fancied that we heard the din of arms, or the shouts of combatants." P. 196.

In conformity with the desolating plan of the campaign, the ruin of the ancient capital of the Czars had been determined. The criminals confined in the different prisons received their liberty, on condition of setting fire to the city, as soon as it should be in the possession of the French army. In order to insure its destruction, the engines, and every means by which the fire might have been extinguished, were removed or destroyed. The Exchange was the first building that fell a prey to the flames. The

stores contained an immense quantity of the most valuable commodities of Europe and Asia: the cellars were filled with sugar, oils, and resin, which burnt with great fury. The French endeavoured to check the progress of the devouring element, but they soon discovered that their efforts were useless. The fire breaking out in different quarters of the city, and increased by a high wind, spread with dreadful rapidity. "So great a calamity impressed even the most hardened minds with the presentiment, that the wrath of Divine justice would one day fall on the first authors of this frightful devastation." P. 200.

"A great part of the population had concealed themselves in their houses, from the terror caused by our arrival; but they left them as the flames reached their asylums. Fear had rendered their grief dumb, and as they tremblingly quitted their retreats, they carried off their most valuable effects, whilst those who were possessed of more sensibility, actuated by natural feelings, sought only to save the lives of their parents, or their children. On one side we saw a son carrying a sick father; on the other, women who poured the torrent of their tears on the infants whom they clasped in their arms. They were followed by the rest of their children, who, fearful of being lost, ran crying after their mothers. Old men, overwhelmed more by grief, than by the weight of years, were seldom able to follow their families: many of them, weeping for the ruin of their country, laid down to die, near the houses where they were born. The streets, the public squares, and especially the churches, were crowded with these unhappy persons, who mourned as they lay on the remains of their property, but shewed no signs of despair. The victors and the vanquished were become equally brutish; the former by excess of fortune, the latter by excess of misery." P. 209.

"The hospitals, containing more than TWELVE THOUSAND WOUNDED, began to burn. The heart, frozen with horror, recoils at the fatal disaster which ensued. Almost all these wretched victims perished. The few who were still living, were seen crawling, half burnt, under the smoking ashes, or groaning under the heaps of dead bodies, making ineffectual efforts to extricate themselves!"

“ It is impossible to depict the confusion and tumult, when the whole of this immense city was given up to pillage. Soldiers, sutlers, galley-slaves, and prostitutes, ran through the streets, penetrated the deserted palaces, and carried off every thing that could gratify their insatiable desire.” P. 211.

“ The generals received orders to quit Moscow. The soldiers being no longer restrained by that awe which is always inspired by the presence of their chiefs, gave themselves up to every excess, and to the most unbridled licentiousness. No retreat was safe, no place was sufficiently sacred, to secure it from their rapacious search. To all the excesses of lust, were added the highest depravity and debauchery. No respect was paid to the nobility of blood, the innocence of youth, or to the tears of beauty. This cruel licentiousness was the consequence of a savage war, in which sixteen united nations, differing in language and manners, thought themselves at liberty to commit every crime, in the persuasion that their disorders would be attributed to one nation alone.” P. 213.

“ Dismayed by so many calamities, I hoped that the shades of night would veil the dreadful scene; but darkness, on the contrary, rendered the conflagration more terrible. The flames, which extended from north to south, burst forth with greater violence, and agitated by the wind, seemed to reach the sky. Clouds of smoke marked the track of the rockets that were hurled by the incendiary criminals from the tops of the steeples, and which, at a distance, resembled falling stars. But nothing was so terrific as the dread that reigned in every mind, and which was heightened in the dead of the night by the shrieks of the unfortunate creatures who were massacred, or by the cries of young females, who fled for refuge to the palpitating bosoms of their mothers, and whose ineffectual struggles only served to inflame the passions of their violators. To these heart-piercing groans were added the howlings of the dogs that were chained to the gates of the palaces, according to the custom at Moscow, and were unable to escape the flames that surrounded them.” P. 214.

“ Many of our soldiers fell victims to their own rapacity, which induced them, heedless of the extreme risk, to brave every danger: excited by the love of plunder, they rushed into the midst of the

fire and smoke ; they waded in blood, trampling on the dead bodies, whilst the ruins and pieces of burning wood fell upon their murderous hands. Perhaps all would have perished had not the insupportable heat at length compelled them to take refuge in their camp."\* P. 218.

SEPT. 17.—The 4th corps were ordered to take up their quarters at the castle of Peterskoe. On their march they overtook crowds of the inhabitants carrying off their infirm parents, with all they had rescued from their burning houses. Their horses having been taken from them by the troops, "men, and even women, were harnessed to the carts" which contained the wrecks of their property, and the dearest objects of their affection. "These interesting groups were accompanied by children, who were nearly naked, and whose countenances were imprinted with a sorrow uncongenial to their age. If the soldiers approached them, they ran crying to throw themselves into their mothers' arms. What abode could be offered them that would not continually recal the object of their terror? Without assistance or shelter, they wandered in the fields, or took refuge in the woods, but wherever they turned they met the conquerors of Moscow, who often ill-treated them, and sold before their eyes the goods which they had stolen from their houses." P. 219.

OCT. 18.—On the evening of this day the order for the retreat was given in consequence of the surprise of a part of the French army at Taroutina with severe loss; and on the 22d Moscow was completely evacuated. On the 24th, the Russians attacked the 4th corps, which was posted at Malo Jaroslavetz. The battle began at four o'clock in the morning and lasted till nine at night.

OCT. 25.—"The town in which we had fought was no longer standing, and we could only discover the line of the streets by the numerous dead bodies with which they were strewed. On all

\* "The French troops, as they poured into the devoted city, had spread themselves in every direction in search of plunder, and in their progress they committed outrages so horrid on the persons of all whom they discovered, that fathers, desperate to save their children from pollution, would set fire to their places of refuge, and find a surer asylum in the flames. The streets, the houses, the cellars flowed with blood and were filled with violation and carnage." —Porter's Narrative, p. 170.

sides we saw human heads and scattered limbs crushed by the artillery that had been manœuvred over them. Many of the sick and wounded had quitted the fight to take refuge in the houses, which were now reduced to heaps of ruins, and under the burning ashes appeared their half-consumed remains. The few who had escaped the flames, having their faces blackened, and their clothes and hair burnt, presented themselves before us, and in an expiring tone uttered cries of the deepest anguish. On seeing them, the most ferocious were moved with compassion, and turning away their eyes, could not refrain from tears." P. 262.

OCT. 30.—“ As we advanced, the country appeared yet more desolate; the fields, trampled by thousands of horses, seemed as though they had never been cultivated; the forests, thinned by the long residence of the troops, partook of the devastation. But the most horrible sight was the multitude of dead bodies, which had been fifty-two days unburied, and scarcely retained the human form. My consternation was at its height on finding near Borodino, the 20,000 men who had been slaughtered there, lying where they fell. The half-buried carcasses of men and horses covered the plain, intermingled with garments stained with blood, and bones gnawed by the dogs and birds of prey, and with the fragments of arms, drums, helmets, and cuirasses.” P. 276.

“ As we were marching over the field of battle we heard at a distance a pitiable object, who demanded our assistance. Touched by his plaintive cries, many of the soldiers drew near the spot, when, to their great astonishment, they observed a French soldier stretched on the ground, with both his legs broken: ‘ I was wounded,’ said he, ‘ on the day of the great battle, and finding myself in a lonely place, where I could gain no assistance, I dragged myself to the brink of a rivulet, and have lived near two months on grass and roots, and on some pieces of bread which I found amongst the dead bodies. At night I have lain in the carcasses of dead horses, and with the flesh of these animals have dressed my wounds as well as with the best medicines. Having observed you at a distance, I collected all my strength, and have advanced sufficiently near to make myself heard.’ Whilst we expressed our surprise at the event, a General, who was made

acquainted with a case, as singular as it was affecting, ordered him to be placed in his own carriage." P. 277.

"Were I to relate all the calamities that sprung from this atrocious war, my narration would be too long; but if I wished from one instance to convey an idea of the rest, it would be from that of the 3000 prisoners we brought from Moscow. During the march, having no provisions to give them, they were herded together like beasts, and were not allowed on any pretext to quit the narrow limits assigned them. Without fire, perishing with cold, they lay on the bare ice; to appease their ravenous hunger they seized with avidity the horse-flesh which was distributed to them, and for want of time and means to dress it, ate it quite raw; and I have been assured, though I dare not believe it, that when this supply failed, many of them ate the flesh of their comrades who had sunk under their miseries." P. 278.

Whilst the retreating army drank the cup of unmingled gall, its course was marked by the outrages of unrestrained cruelty and vindictive rage. The first division, on leaving the quarters where they had slept the preceding night, generally consigned them to the flames, as well as the towns and villages through which they passed, equally regardless of the sufferings of the inhabitants, or of their following countrymen, who were thus deprived of shelter. The few houses that escaped their ravages were burnt by the second division, who completed what their comrades had left unfinished in the work of devastation. In the ruins were entombed soldiers and peasants, children wantonly murdered, and young girls massacred on the spot where they had been violated. Boundless destruction was the word of command, and such was the obedience paid to the order, that the Abbey of Kolotskoi, about 150 miles from Moscow, was the only building in that distance that was left undemolished. Stripped of its former splendour, and crowded with the sick and wounded, it resembled a hospital rather than a convent.

Nov. 6th. "We marched towards Smolensk with an ardour that redoubled our strength, and had nearly reached Doroghoboui, which is only twenty leagues from it, when the thought alone, that in three days we should arrive there, excited a general intoxication of joy. The atmosphere, which till then had been brilliant,

was suddenly covered with cold and dark vapours ; the sun, concealed by thick clouds, disappeared from our sight, and the snow falling in large flakes, involved every object in obscurity. The forests echoed with the wild howling of the wind, which blew empestuously, and brought down the black pines overloaded with ice. The whole country presented a white and dreary surface."

" In the midst of this horrid gloom, overwhelmed by the whirlwinds of snow which assailed him, the soldier could no longer distinguish the main road from the ditches, and often fell into the latter, which served him for a tomb. Others, eager to press forward, dragged themselves along with pain ; badly clothed and shod, having nothing to eat or drink, groaning and shivering with cold, they gave no assistance, neither shewed any signs of compassion to those who, sinking from weakness, expired around them."

" Many of these miserable creatures, dying from exhaustion, struggled hard in the agonies of death. Some of them in the most affecting manner bade adieu to their brethren and companions in arms ; others with their last sigh pronounced the name of their mother, and of the country which gave them birth. The rigour of the cold benumbed their stiffened limbs, and soon reached their vitals. Stretched on the road, we could only see the heaps of snow that covered them, and that formed undulations in our route like those in a grave-yard. Flocks of ravens, abandoning the plains to take shelter in the neighbouring woods, croaked ominously as they flew over our heads ; and troops of dogs, which had followed us from Moscow, and lived solely on our bloody remains, howled around us, as if desirous of hastening the moment when we were to become their prey." P. 299.

These famishing animals " often contended with the soldiers for the dead horses which were left on the road." P. 329.

NOV. 8. PASSAGE OF THE VOP.—The bed of the river was choked by the carriages, cannon, and the numerous bodies of men and horses drowned in attempting the passage. " The cries of those who were crossing ; the consternation of others who were preparing to cross, and who were every moment precipitated with their horses down the steep and slippery bank into

the stream; the distraction of the women, the screams of the children, and the despair of even the soldiers, rendered this passage a scene so afflicting, that the remembrance is still dreadful to those who witnessed it." P. 318.

"Our soldiers had scarcely quitted the river, when the Cossacks no longer meeting any obstacles advanced to these fatal shores, where they found many poor wretches who from the state of their health had not been able to cross the river. Although our enemies were surrounded with booty, they stript their prisoners, and left them naked on the snow. From the opposite bank we saw these Tartars dividing their bloody spoils." P. 321.

"The last night had been dreadful. To form an idea of its rigours, it is necessary to conceive an army encamped on the snow, in the depth of a severe winter, pursued by an enemy to whom it could oppose neither artillery nor cavalry. The soldiers, without shoes and almost destitute of clothing, were enfeebled by hunger and fatigue. Seated on their knapsacks they slept on their knees. From this benumbing posture they only rose to broil a few slices of horseflesh, or to melt some pieces of ice. They were often without wood, and to keep up a fire demolished the houses in which the generals were lodged. When we awoke in the morning the village had disappeared; and in this manner towns that were standing entire in the evening, formed the next day one vast conflagration." P. 321.

Nov. 15th. "Whole teams, sinking under their fatigues, fell together and obstructed the way. More than *thirty thousand horses* perished in a few days. All the defiles that were impassable for the carriages, were strewed with arms, helmets, cuirasses, broken trunks, portmanteaus, and clothes of every kind. At intervals we saw trees, at the feet of which the soldiers had attempted to light fires, but had expired in making these useless efforts to warm themselves. They were stretched by dozens round the green branches, which they had in vain endeavoured to kindle; and the number of dead bodies would have blocked up the road, if we had not employed men to throw them into the ruts and ditches."

"These horrors, so far from exciting our sensibility, only hardened our hearts. Having no longer the power of exercising

our cruelty on our enemies, we turned it on each other. The best friends were estranged; whoever experienced the least sickness, was certain of never seeing his country again, unless he had good horses and faithful servants. Preserving the plunder of Moscow, was preferred by most, to the pleasure of saving a comrade. We heard around us the groans of the dying, and the plaintive voice of those who were abandoned; but all were deaf to their cries, and if any one approached them when on the point of death, it was for the purpose of stripping them, and searching whether they had any remains of food." P. 345.

Nov. 17.—“Liadoui being in Lithuania, we thought that it would be respected as belonging to ancient Poland. The next morning we left it before day-break; but to our great astonishment, were, according to custom, lighted by the fire of the buildings which began to burn. This was the occasion of one of the most dreadful events that occurred in our retreat. My pen would shrink from its office, if the relation of so many misfortunes had any other object or moral, than that of holding up to detestation the fatal ambition that forced civilized people to make war like barbarians.”

“Amongst the burning houses were three large barns filled with poor soldiers, chiefly wounded. They could not escape from two of these, without passing through the one in front, which was on fire; the most active saved themselves by leaping out of the windows, but all those who were sick or crippled, not having strength to move, saw the flames advancing rapidly to devour them. Touched by their shrieks, some, who were least hardened, endeavoured in vain to save them: we could only see them half buried under the burning rafters. Through whirlwinds of smoke, they entreated their comrades to shorten their sufferings by depriving them of life, and from motives of humanity, we thought it our duty to comply with their wishes. As there were some who, notwithstanding, still survived, we heard them with feeble voices crying, ‘*Fire on us! fire on us! at the head! at the head! do not miss!*’ These heart-rending cries did not cease till the whole were consumed.” P. 363.

Nov. 27. THE PASSAGE OF THE BEREZINA.—“They who from weariness and ignorance of danger, were less eager to cross the

river, endeavoured to light a fire, and to repose from their fatigues. In these bivouacs we saw to what a degree of brutality excess of misery will lead. We there saw men fighting for a morsel of bread. If any one benumbed with cold, drew near a fire, the soldiers to whom it belonged, inhumanly drove him away, and if a parching thirst forced you to beg a drop of water from him who had a full bowl, the refusal was always accompanied with abuse. We often heard, even men of education, who had been friends, quarrelling for a handful of straw, or for a part of the dead horse they were attempting to cut up. This campaign was the more frightful, as it demoralized our characters, and gave birth to vices till then unknown to us; they who had been generous, humane, and upright, became selfish, avaricious, cruel, and unjust." P. 364.

28.—“ There were two bridges, one for the carriages, the other for the infantry; but the crowd was so great, and the approaches so dangerous, that the throng collected on the bank of the Berezina became incapable of moving. In spite of these difficulties, some who were on foot saved themselves by their perseverance; but about 8 o'clock in the morning, the bridge reserved for the carriages having broken down, the baggage and artillery advanced to the other, and attempted to force a passage. Then began a frightful contest between the infantry and the cavalry, in which many of them perished by the hands of their comrades; a still greater number were suffocated at the foot of the bridge, where the carcasses of men and horses obstructed the road to such a degree, that to approach the river, it was necessary to climb over the bodies of those who had been crushed. Some of them were still alive, and struggling with the agonies of death. In order to extricate themselves, they caught hold of those who were marching over them, but the latter disengaged themselves with violence, and trampled them under their feet. Whilst they contended with so much fury, the following multitude, like a raging wave, incessantly overwhelmed fresh victims.” P. 385.

In the midst of this dreadful confusion, the Russians made a furious attack on the rear guard.

“ In the heat of the engagement, many balls fell on the

miserable crowd, that for three days had been pressing round the bridge, and even some shells burst in the midst of them. Terror and despair then took possession of every heart anxious for self-preservation; women and children, who had escaped so many disasters, seemed to have been preserved to experience a death still more deplorable. Leaving their carriages, they ran to embrace the knees of the first person they met, and implored him with tears to take them to the other side. The sick and wounded, seated on the trunk of a tree, or supported on crutches, looked eagerly for some friend that could assist them; but their cries were lost in the air, every one thought only of his own safety." P. 390.

"On seeing the enemy, those who had not crossed, mingling with the Poles, rushed towards the bridge; artillery, baggage, cavalry, and infantry, all endeavoured to pass first. The strong threw into the water the weak, who impeded their advance, and trampled under foot the sick and wounded whom they found in their way. Many hundreds were crushed under the wheels of the artillery: others, who had hoped to save themselves by swimming, were frozen in the river, or perished by slipping from the ice. Thousands and thousands of hopeless victims, notwithstanding these sorrowful examples, threw themselves into the Berezina, where they nearly all perished in convulsions of grief or despair.

"The division of Girard succeeded by force of arms in overcoming all the obstacles that retarded their march, and, scaling the mountain of dead bodies that obstructed the road, gained the opposite shore, where the Russians would soon have followed them, if they had not immediately set fire to the bridge.

"Many of those who were left on the other bank with the prospect of the most horrible death, attempted to cross the bridge through the flames, but midway they threw themselves into the river, to avoid being burnt. At length, the Russians having made themselves masters of the field of battle, our troops retired; the passage of the river ceased, and the most tremendous uproar was succeeded by a death-like silence." P. 393.

"In our march to Zembin, we ascended the right bank of the river, whence we could distinctly see all that passed on the other side. The cold was intense, and the wind howled frightfully; towards the close of the day, the darkness was illumined by the

numerous fires of the enemy who occupied the hills. At the feet of these heights, groaned our companions, devoted to death : never had they experienced moments so dreadful as on this disastrous night. All the horrors that can be conceived by the imagination, would convey but a faint impression of what they endured. The elements, let loose, seemed to have combined to afflict all nature, and to chastise man. The conquerors and the conquered were overwhelmed with sufferings. The former however had enormous piles of burning wood, whilst the latter had neither fire nor shelter ; their groans alone indicated the spot that contained so many unfortunate victims." P. 394.

Dec. 5.—“ At every step we saw brave officers supported on pine branches, covered with rags, with their hair and beards matted with icicles. These warriors, once the terror of our enemies, and the conquerors of two-thirds of Europe, having lost their noble mien, dragged themselves slowly along, and could not obtain a look of pity from the soldiers they had commanded. Their situation was the more deplorable, as whoever had not strength to march was abandoned, and every one who was abandoned, in one hour afterwards was a dead man. Every bivouac presented us the next day with the appearance of a field of battle. Whenever a soldier sunk from fatigue, his next neighbour rushed on him and stripped him of his clothes, even before he was dead. Every moment we heard them begging the aid of some charitable hand : ‘ My comrades,’ exclaimed one with a heart-rending voice, ‘ help me to rise ; deign to lend me a hand to pursue my march.’ All passed by without even regarding him. ‘ Ah ! I conjure you not to abandon me to the enemy : in the name of humanity grant me the trifling assistance I ask : help me to rise.’ Instead of being moved by a prayer so touching, they considered him as already dead, and began to strip him : we then heard his cries, ‘ Help ! help ! they murder me ! Why do you trample me under your feet ? Why do you take from me the remainder of my money and my bread ? You even take away my clothes !’ If some officer, urged by generous feelings, did not arrive in time to prevent it, many in the like situation would have been assassinated by their own comrades.” P. 407.

Dec. 8.—“ The road was covered with soldiers who no longer

retained the human form, and whom the enemy disdained to take prisoners. Every day furnished scenes too painful to relate. Some had lost their hearing, others their speech, and many, by excessive cold and hunger, were reduced to such a state of stupid phrenzy, that they roasted the dead bodies for food, and even gnawed their own hands and arms. Some, who were too weak to lift a piece of wood, or to roll a stone towards the fire, sat down upon their dead companions, and with an unmoved countenance, gazed upon the burning logs. When they were consumed, these livid spectres, unable to get up, fell by the side of those on whom they had been seated. Many, in a state of mental alienation, in order to warm themselves, plunged their bare feet into the fire; some, with a convulsive laugh, threw themselves into the flames, and uttering shocking cries, perished in the most horrible contortions; others in a state of equal madness, followed their example, and shared the same fate."\* P. 410.

Dec. 9.—“Every day’s march presented us with a repetition of the mournful scenes of which I have given a faint sketch. Our hearts, completely hardened by these disgusting pictures, lost all sensibility. We were reduced to a state of brutality that left us no feeling but the instinct of self-preservation.” P. 412.

Dec. 12. “Exhausted by one of the longest and most fatiguing marches, we reached Kowno, where the wrecks of each corps were reunited. They encamped as usual in the streets; and as we knew that our deplorable situation did not admit of our maintaining any position, the magazines, which were well stored, were given up to pillage. We had an immediate and abundant supply of clothing, flour, and rum. Our quarters were filled with broken casks, and the liquor that was spilled formed a pool in the public square. The soldiers who had been long deprived of this beverage drank to excess, and more than twelve hundred of them, in a state of intoxication, lay down to sleep in the houses or on the snow, and were frozen to death.” P. 423.

\* “Multitudes of these desolate fugitives lost their speech, others were seized with frenzy, and many were so maddened by the extremes of pain and hunger, that they tore the dead bodies of their comrades into pieces, and feasted on the remains!”—*Porter*, p. 377.

“ At length, on the morning of the 13th December, of FOUR HUNDRED THOUSAND warriors who passed the Niemen near Kowno, on opening the campaign, scarcely TWENTY THOUSAND repassed it, of whom at least two-thirds had not seen the Kremlin !” P. 427.

Porter in his narrative fully corroborates the statements of La-baume, respecting the sufferings of the French ; but is silent on those sustained by the Russians, who, he says, “ though out under all the inclemencies of the season, hardly felt its fierceness,” p.300. He expatiates on their brilliant exploits, on “ the overwhelming power of the Cossac arm,” on the vengeful retribution of the Cossac sword, on the “ miracles of bravery” performed by the “ clouds of Donskoy heroes ;” and in a strain well suited to “ the hyperbole of fiction,” informs us, that “ darkness and light were the same to the Cossac, the blaze of his own ardour was sufficient.” P. 306. From a recent work, attributed to the pen of Sir Robert Wilson, we learn, that they were not exempt from calamity, although they were much better provided than the French.\* “ During the retreat, a ducat, then worth one pound sterling, was, with thanks, the price of a single horse-shoe even in the Russian army,” p. 24. “ The Russian army under Kutusow, which, in the commencement of the pursuit, had amounted to *one hundred and twenty thousand* effective men, could not array *thirty-five thousand* on the frontier of the Duchy of Warsaw.— There were many companies without a *single man*, and many battalions with not so many as fifty.” p. 32. “ Such had been the destruction, even amongst the Russians, that a reinforcement of *ten thousand* men, which had marched for Wilna, arrived only with *fifteen hundred* ; and of them seven hundred were next day in the hospitals, or rather the charnel houses of that city.”

“ In the hospitals of Wilna, there were left above 17,000 dead and dying, frozen and freezing ; the bodies of the former, *broken up*, served to stop the cavities in windöws, floors, and walls ; but in one of the corridores of the Great Convent, above 1,500 bodies were piled up transversely, as pigs of lead or iron. When these were finally removed on sledges to be burnt, the most ex-

\* Sketch of the Military and Political Power of Russia in the year 1817, 4th Edition, (London, 1817.)

traordinary figures were presented by the variety of their attitudes, for none seemed to have been frozen in a composed state. Each was fixed in the last action of his life, in the last direction given to his limbs: even the eyes retained the last expression, either of anger, pain, or entreaty. In the roads, men were collected round the burning ruins of the cottages, which a mad spirit of destruction had fired, picking and eating the burnt bodies of fellow men, while thousands of horses were moaning in agony, with their flesh mangled and hacked to satisfy the cravings of a hunger that knew no pity. In many of the sheds, men scarcely alive, had heaped on their frozen bodies human carcasses, which, festering by the communication of animal heat, had mingled the dying and the dead in one mass of putrefaction." p. 34. "The Vistula was passed; and the main Russian army, reduced by farther sickness and exertion, mustered only *eighteen thousand* men, when the campaign was closed by the occupation of Kalish!"—p. 35.

Such was the catastrophe of this memorable campaign. On a moderate computation, FIVE HUNDRED THOUSAND lives were lost in one hundred and seventy three days!

From the details of misery and crime which have been selected from the Russian campaign, we may form some estimate of the evils which are inflicted on the world by the desolating scourge of war. Let it not be imagined that these evils were peculiar to this campaign, or that atrocious cruelty is exclusively confined to the soldiers of any one nation; they are the legitimate offspring of war, and the pages of history are stained with their parallels. If it be said that the colouring is too strong, we ask what language can heighten the scenes of Smolensk, Borodino, and Malo Jaroslavetz; the tragical end of the sufferers in the hospitals of Moscow, Liadoui, and Wilna; the pillage and destruction of Moscow; the passage of the Vop and of the Berezina, or the varied and countless horrors of the retreat?

If we examine the spirit, the practice, and the laws of war, by the Christian test, where shall we discover any traces of the Christian spirit? Are they not, on the contrary, in every respect the reverse of the precepts of the Prince of Peace? Are not selfishness and indifference the predominant feelings of an army?

Are not theft and burglary considered venial in war, and a violation of the principles of morality, under existing circumstances, justifiable, and sometimes even meritorious? Thus crimes which in this enlightened country would incur the popular odium and the forfeiture of life, are palliated under softer appellations, and are committed without offence to the moral feelings of the public. The perpetrator of a single murder is branded with infamy and doomed to expiate his crime by an ignominious death, but to take away the lives of myriads in war is deemed glorious and honourable. On what principles of reason, of humanity, or of religion, can such a perversion of terms be justified? The writers of contending nations may describe a massacre in glowing language, and claim for their respective countrymen the honours of a glorious victory; the vaulted roof of a cathedral may ring with the solemn notes of a *Te Deum*, and the praises of a conqueror; and in attending the triumphant celebration, the spectator may be dazzled with the imaginary grandeur of martial fame; but the more appropriate scene of commemoration, is the field of battle drenched with rivers of blood, and the more appropriate music, the groans of the wounded, and the responsive lamentations of the hundreds of thousands, who on a day like that of Borodino, have lost their husbands, their fathers, their sons, and their brothers. But what is the value of human life, or what the importance of human woe, in the view of those who can delight in such scenes? We speak with abhorrence of the barbarous and degrading superstitions by which human victims are offered in sacrifice to devils; but can we for a moment suppose, that our military sacrifices are acceptable and well pleasing in the sight of God? And whilst we give our sanction and support to war, do we not uphold a system more sanguinary, more cruel, and more extensively destructive than any of the heathen rites which we condemn?